

*The Happiness of GREAT-BRITAIN
under the present Establishment.*

A 5
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the
Parish-Church of *Westham*,
IN THE
County of *ESSEX*:

On *Thursday June* the 7th 1716.

Being a DAY of

Thanksgiving to Almighty God

For His Blessing upon His MAJESTIES

COUNSELS and ARMS

In Suppressing the Late

Unnatural Rebellion.

By BENJ. CARTER, M. A.

Publish'd at the Request of several
Gentlemen of the Parish.

L O N D O N :

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DEUT. XI. 26.

*Behold, I set before you this
Day a Blessing and a Curse.*



THESE were the Words of Moses to the Children of Israel, and are perhaps as justly applicable to the British Nation, as they have ever been to any Nation or People since they were uttered. God chose the Israelites out of all the Nations upon Earth, * to be his peculiar People, and to make them high in Praise, and in Name, and in Honour; He brought them out of Egypt by Temptations, by Signs, and by Wonders, with a mighty Hand, and outstretched Arm; He gave them Statutes and Judgments to walk by, conducted them into a Land of Plenty and Delicacy; made

* Deut. xxvi. 18, 19.

them victorious over all their Enemies, and put the Fear and the Dread of them upon all Nations round about. So that while they continued a grateful and obedient, they were also a very happy, and flourishing People, distinguish'd for their Reputation and Esteem Abroad; for their Riches and Prosperity, and an Affluence of all good Things at Home: But if even this chosen and favourite People forgot their GOD, and were unmindful of his Word, deserted his Worship, and fell into Idolatry, He withdrew his Favour and Protection, and their State became the Reverse of what it was before; their fertile and well-peopled Land became barren and desolate; their Conquests and Triumphs were chang'd into Overthrows and Disgraces; their Honour and Reputation sunk into Scorn and Contempt; and they, who before were the Wonder or Envy of all the neighbouring Nations, became an *Astonishment, and a Proverb, and a By-word among them.* This was the Blessing, this the Curse, which *Moses* set before the *Israelites*: Such as their Carriage and Behaviour towards their GOD was, such should their future Condition be; if dutiful and obedient, a Blessing was entail'd upon them; if disobedient and rebellious, a Curse was sure to overtake them.

I INTEND not to offer at a Parallel between us and the *Israelites*, to whom these
Words

Words of *Moses* were addressed. I shall only take Occasion from them to shew, That GOD has dealt very graciously with this Nation, and put our Happiness into our own Power; that He has set a *Blessing* before us, which we cannot reject, but with the utmost Stupidity and Ingratitude; That the Danger hereof would be equal to the Folly, and the Punishment of such a Carriage proportion'd to the Sin of it; That therefore it behoves us to receive the Favours of Heaven with a suitable Temper of Mind, and as the ALMIGHTY has been infinitely kind to us, and even *rejoyced over us to do us good*, so should we labour to excel in all holy Obedience and Thankfulness to Him.

GIVE me Leave therefore to suggest to your Thoughts *several Particulars*, which may help us to frame a *just Idea* of our National Happiness, to excite in us all a devout, and humble Temper of Mind, and to lead us to a right Improvement of this *solemn, and joyful Day*.

I. ONE Part of our Happiness as a Nation, consists in the full, and peaceable Enjoyment of the Protestant, Reformed Religion, as profess'd and taught in the *Church of England*.

As we are Men, the most valuable Knowledge, is that which relates to the Nature and Perfections, to the Worship and Service,
of

of the supreme BEING; and the most valuable Kind of Liberty, is to have the free Exercise of that Worship, according to the best of our Knowledge. As we are Christians, we have a certain, and unerring Rule to guide us in religious Matters, I mean, the Revelation of the divine Will in the sacred Scriptures; to these we have conformed our Doctrines, by the Direction of these we have settled our Worship, and now serve the Blessed GOD, and Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, in the Purity and Simplicity of the Gospel. It would at this Time be a tedious and unnecessary Labour, were I able, to declare by what Steps and Degrees, the several erroneous Doctrines, and corrupt Practices, either not warranted by, or directly contrary to the Word of God, were introduced into the Christian Church. It may suffice to say, That these were at length swell'd to so prodigious a Number, that the Christian Religion was both exceedingly encumbered, and debased by them, and very much chang'd from what it was in the Time of our Saviour and his Apostles. The Doctrines then were few, and of divine Authority; the Rules and Precepts, strict and pure, and holy; the publick Worship, grave and rational, as perform'd by Men whose Hearts were fill'd with the Love and Fear of the Divine MAJESTY; the Intent of the Whole, was to subdue the Mind,
and

and purify the Conscience, and prepare Men for a State of Felicity and Glory: This was the admirable Religion of which the blessed JESUS was the Founder, and the Apostles the Propagators; but alas! how alter'd, how corrupted by the Follies and Fancies of Men, to whom *Gain was Godliness!* Doctrines supported by the express Authority of Revelation, were wholly set aside, or explain'd into Absurdities and Contradictions; many others of humane Invention were impos'd upon Mens Belief under no less Penalty than that of everlasting Damnation. The best Rules and Precepts of the Gospel for strict and holy Living, which our Saviour and his Apostles observed exactly themselves, and press'd upon all others rigorously, and without Abatement, were weakned and enervated; and upon the opening of a new and inexhaustible Treasure of *Indulgences, and Dispensations, and Pardons*, which the Christian Church for many Ages never dream'd of, Men were encouraged, I had almost said *authorized* to sin; publick Worship was dressed up with all possible Pomp and Pageantry, with numberless Ceremonies, and an unlimited Expence, as if He who regards the Heart only, were to be delighted with vain and theatrical Shews: The whole seem'd calculated for the Interest and Advantage of the *Managers*, and the Amusement and Delusion of the *Votaries*.

Thus

Thus was the *easy Yoke*, and *light Burden* of *Christ*, made hard, and grievous, and intolerable, and the Christian Church for many Ages groan'd under the Weight and Pressure of it, till it pleased God to raise up Men of Wisdom and Piety, of Courage and invincible Resolution, who saw with Grief and holy Indignation the Enchroachments of papal Tyranny, and when it was at the Height, boldly attack'd it, and were prospered and blessed in the mighty Enterprize. This was done in several Parts of the Christian World much about the same Time. I need not tell you with what Prudence and mature Deliberation, our pious Reformers first set about the Work of reducing Christianity to its primitive Standard in this Kingdom, with what unwearied Industry and Pains, with what Strength of Learning and Eloquence, this glorious Design was prosecuted; how great the Difficulties and Dangers, how severe and bloody the Persecutions and Sufferings, the Promoters of it were expos'd to: This Part of the Account would be too melancholly upon a Day of Thanksgiving; it was at length, however difficult, happily effected, and the Reformation brought to a full Establishment in the ever-memorable Reign of *Queen Elizabeth*. This Establishment we enjoy the Benefit of to this very Day. May it be enjoy'd by Ages to come, and transmitted from Generation to Generation!

Now,

On June the 7th, 1716. 9

Now, without reflecting upon the Reformed Churches Abroad, or drawing invidious Comparisons between ourselves and them, we may venture in Justice to our Church, and for the Satisfaction of its Members, to affirm, That we are at least as free from all Errors in Doctrines, as little liable to Exception in our Way of Worship, have as few Defects in our Constitution, as any known Church in the Christian World. Nothing is wanting among us for the Information of the Understanding, or the Guidance and Direction of the Will: *We are built upon the Foundations of the Apostles and Prophets*, our Doctrines founded upon the clear, and indubitable Authority of the Word of GOD, our Frame and Government founded upon the Model of the first, and purest Ages; the Scripture was the Rule of our Reformation, primitive Antiquity our Guide in Matters not doctrinal, our Worship is perform'd in a middle Way, between the Homeliness of those who causelessly separate from us, and the gaudy Fopperies of those from whom we have upon the justest Causes separated ourselves: In fine, The Whole is contriv'd with great Wisdom and Piety, for the Glory of the GOD whom we worship, for the Salvation of the Souls of his People, and for the answering the great Ends of the Constitution of all Churches, ORDER AND BEAUTY, UNITY AND PEACE, HOLINESS AND EDIFICATION.

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Surely

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Surely the Deliverances which the ALMIGHTY has so often, so wondrously vouchsafed to us, have not been for our own Sakes, for *we are a stiff-necked People*; but for his Name's Sake which is called upon, for his Truth's Sake which is professed amongst us. To ourselves we may apply, with some Variation, those Words of *Moses to the Israelites*, * *What Nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God hath been to us*, as often as we have called upon Him, whenever we have stood in need of his Aid, and implor'd his Assistance?

AND what Nation is there so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous as those which our GOD hath given to us, that hath a Religion and Worship so pure and so spiritual, so free from the Mixtures of Idolatry and Superstition, so agreeable to his Holy Gospel, as that which is now settled among us? May it be our Care to conform our Lives to the Rules and Precepts of this Religion, *to observe and to keep them inviolably*, for this will be our *Wisdom and Understanding* in the Sight of our Neighbouring Nations, and this will be a Strength and Security, and an impregnable Defence to our own Nation, by Engaging the Favour and Protection of our GOD on our Side.

* Deut. iv. 7, 8.

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ple unto Himself, and make thee plenteous in Goods, in the Fruit of thy Body, and in the Fruit of thy Cattle, and in the Fruit of thy Ground : The Lord shall open to thee his good Treasure, the Heaven to give the Rain unto thy Land in due Season, and to bless all the Work of thy Hand ; and thou shalt lend unto many Nations, and thou shalt not borrow ; And the Lord shall make thee the Head, and not the Tail ; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath. And in another Place to the like Purpose, Levit. xxvi. 6. I will give Peace in the Land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid : Neither shall the Sword go through the Land ; for I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my Covenant with you, and I will set my Tabernacle amongst you, and my Soul shall not abhor you, and I will walk among you, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my People. These several Particulars do, as yet (adored be the divine Goodness) agree to us ; may they always do so in their full Latitude and Extent !

4. As the ALMIGHTY has thus multiply'd his Blessings upon us, so He has often made bare his holy Arm for us, and saved us from the Hands of our Enemies, who have contriv'd our Destruction, or from our own Hands, when seized with a Spirit of Giddiness and Infatuation, we have laboured to destroy ourselves. He has saved us, as He did

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did the *Israelites* of old, by *Signs*, and by *Wonders*; I mean, by amazing, and miraculous Interpositions of his Providence, when the Face of Things was desperate, and no humane Help could have availed. When the Reformation was in its Infancy, a popish Queen came to the Crown; the short Time of whose Reign was so diligently improved by the Zealots of Popery to the Advantage of their Cause, by the irresistible Arguments of Fire and Faggot, of Dungeons, Racks and Flames, used against all that durst oppose them, that the Reformation was extremely weaken'd and sunk; and had her Reign been lengthened out a few Years longer, or had she propagated the papal Line, as those of her Religion hoped and expected she would, it must have been quite extinguish'd, and the Nation continued to this Day bound in the Fetters of Superstition and Idolatry. In the succeeding Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, of happy Memory, many dark and horrid Conspiracies were form'd against her Person and Government; but through the Mercy of G-o-d, not one took Effect. A vast *Armada* was sent against her from *Spain*, which was vainly styl'd *Invincible*, though indeed, in Regard of any equal Force that could then be sent against it, it might too justly have been deem'd such, and was rather defeated by the Winds and Seas, and the *Hand of Heaven*, than by any humane Power.

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Power. I need not tell you of the critical Discovery of the *Powder-Plot* in the Reign of K. *James I*, nor of the wonderful, and peaceful Restoration of King *Charles II*, after the Distractions and Confusions of almost twenty Years, nor of the quick and hasty Advances of a late Reign toward Popery and Arbitrary Power, which were just ready to break in upon us, when it pleased GOD to deliver us from all our Fears by a timely, and happy Revolution. I only recal these remarkable Transactions to your Minds, because they are standing Monuments of GOD's distinguishing Love to us, and bear upon them the visible Characters of a kind, and overruling Providence, which hath preserved our excellent Constitution both in CHURCH and STATE, notwithstanding the many Attacks made upon it at several Times from different Quarters, and by the special Indulgence whereof, we enjoy it at this very Day under the Guard and Defence of a Protestant KING, whom we beseech the ALMIGHTY to continue long at the Head of it.

HAVING thus enumerated the several Particulars which compose our National Happiness, I am persuaded you yourselves have begun to apply the Whole to the Occasion of this Day's Assembly, and that ye all see abundant Reason to give GOD Thanks for putting an End to this *Unnatural Rebellion*, which would have untravell'd that
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lovely Frame which Providence has wrought for us, and have thrown us into endless Confusions, and unspeakable Miseries. A Civil War, is one of the three dreadful Instruments of divine Justice, to punish sinful Communities of Men; the Foundations of it are laid in Malice and Wickedness; it is usually carried on with uncommon Rage and Fury, and marks out its Course with Burnings and Devastations and Slaughter! Which Side soever conquers, the Country is overcome of itself, exhausted by its own Treasure, impoverish'd by its own Riches, weakened by its own Power, destroyed by its own Strength! Of this the Barons Wars in the Reign of King *John*, the long Contentments between the illustrious Houses of *Tork* and *Lancaster*, and the great Rebellion in the Time of the unfortunate King *Charles I.* are melancholy Instances, which discolour the Thread, and stain the Glory of the *British* History. The late Rebellion was in all Respects full of Horror, and a Master-piece of Iniquity; begun without Reason or Provocation; headed by some who had entred into the deepest Engagements, and made the strongest Protections of Fidelity to King *GEORGE*; design'd to over-turn that Scheme of Happiness, which had been labour'd in several successive Parliaments, in which Men of every Denomination had their Turn and Share; design'd to deprive us
of

of all that is good and valuable; Yes, † *It was an open Attempt to destroy the best of Kings, to ruin the whole Fabrick, and raze the very Foundations of a Government, the best suited of any in the World to perfect the Happiness, and support the Dignity of humane Nature; and had it succeeded, must have brought a lasting and universal Destruction on the whole Kingdom.* That so black and desperate an Attempt should be made by professed Papists, who always have been, and always will be engaged in an *holy League* against our Religion, and our Liberties, and ready to take every Opportunity that offers to discharge that accursed Obligation, with which their Church has bound their Consciences, in respect of Heresy and Hereticks, is no Matter of Wonder: * *Tho' even from them, Rebellion was but an ill Return for the Quiet they have enjoyed:* But that Protestants, who affect to put on an extraordinary Zeal for a Protestant Church, who have repeated their Oaths and Abjurations, should in Defiance to them all, joyn in so execrable an Attempt, is an irreconcilable Contradiction, even to common Sense; and such an Instance of Infatuation as is hardly to be matched in our own or any other History. I am ashamed but to repeat the Pretences upon which this Rebellion was founded; they are so weak, that one has

† L^d. High Steward's Speech, Feb. the 9th when the six Lords received Sentence. * The Bishops Declaration.

much ado to believe, the Promoters of it were serious in alledging them. Our *imaginary Grievances* were to be redress'd, by bringing upon us *real and insupportable* ones. Our Church was to be secur'd by being put into the hands of a *popish Pretender*, from whom * *not so much as a frail Promise was obtain'd, that it should be preserved, or even tolerated.* Our Laws and Liberties were to be put out of Danger of any future Invasion, by being given up once for all into the Hands of *One* educated in the Maxims of *French Tyranny*, and *arbitrary Government.* Thus were we courting, and earnestly striving for that Misery, to preserve our selves from which has been the Business of our Counsels and Arms for almost thirty Years pass'd; and blessed be God, that has given Success to them, and vouchsafed us new Instances of his Favour and Presence by our late Deliverance from the designs of our Enemies. The Clouds which threatned us, are dispers'd; Tranquillity and Peace are restor'd. We are happy in the Exercise of the Protestant Religion, and in the Communion of the best of Churches; happy in the Benefits of wise, and mild, and equitable Laws; happy under the Defence and Protection of a good, and gracious PRINCE, led by Inclination and Principle, as well as bound by his sacred Word and Oath, to maintain this Religion, and these Laws in a flourish-

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ing Condition; happy in a Prospect of having all these Happineſſes ſecured and perpetuated to us by a long Succeſſion of Proteſtant Heirs, of which we truſt there will never be One wanting to fill and adorn the *Britiſh Throne*.

BEHOLD, GOD *has ſet a Bleſſing before us*, He has bleſſ'd us above all the Nations round about us, and will continue ſo to do, if we ſtudy Obedience to Him, Duty to the Sovereign He has ſet over us, Unity and Peace among ourſelves. Let all Animofities, and Envyings, and Hatred, henceforth ceaſe; let all ungrateful Diſtinctions of Name be aboliſhed; let the Spirit of Calumny and Slander be for ever extinguiſh'd; let each One labour in his reſpective Station to adorn his holy Religion by an upright and blameleſs Life; This is the beſt Subject to the KING, and the trueſt Lover of his Country. And let not our Zeal, even for a good Cauſe, tranſport us into the Exceſſes of any unwarrantable Paſſion, whereby we ſin againſt GOD: Zeal is a commendable Affection of Mind, and ſubſervient to excellent Purpoſes; but it is then only commendable, when it is founded in Knowledge, regulated by prudent and diſcreet Meaſures, directed to good and pious Ends; it will not ſanctify Pride or Revenge, it will not take away the Guilt of Swearing or Drunkenneſs, nor juſtify any Breach or Violation of the Laws of GOD, and
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the Rules of Morality. Now if Zeal in a good Cause must be thus watched over, and is capable of being so much abused, what must Zeal in a bad Cause be? 'tis then Rage, and Fury, and Madness, and produces the most direful Effects. Let us be zealous, first and chiefly for the GLORY OF GOD AND THE HONOUR OF HIS SACRED AND TREMENDOUS NAME, and in Subordination to this great and ultimate End of our Lives we may and ought to be zealous also for the PROTESTANT RELIGION and the PRESENT ESTABLISHMENT, for the PEACE and LIBERTIES of our Country; for the SAFETY and HAPPINESS and GLORY of our KING. I need not tell you that Profaneness and Immorality, Disobedience against GOD, and Contempt of his Laws, Faction and Division, Hatred and Uncharitableness may yet alienate the Divine Favour from us, and change our *Blessing into a Curse*. But I trust that that GOD who has so signally manifested his Mercy and Loving-kindness to us will also give us Grace to make a right Improvement thereof. We are by His Favour in a State of Peace at Home, and Credit Abroad, at the Head of the Protestant Interest, able to assist and support our Friends, and to bring those to Reason that shall causelessly injure and affront us. Nothing can ruin, nothing can hurt us but our Sins and Divisions; And Oh! that it would please GOD to endue us with a Spirit
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of Love; and Gratitude, and Wisdom and Piety, that we may *for/ake those and heal these*. So might we rest assur'd of the Continuance of His Care over us, and Presence with us, and that no Weapon or Design form'd against us should ever prosper. But that he would go on to vouchsafe, as he has hitherto done, His special Protection to our Sovereign Lord King GEORGE; to their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, and preserve every Branch of the Royal Family, for the present Security and Satisfaction, and for the future Good of these Kingdoms. And though the first Years of our Gracious King's Reign has to his great Uneasiness and Regret been clouded and overcast by an unnatural Rebellion, yet we hope there are many many Years to come, and that every of them will be distinguish'd by the endearing Marks of Clemency and Peace: And in fine, that the Happiness we are now in Possession of will be transmitted to the Children yet unborn, that God will establish us an holy People to himself, and make GREAT BRITAIN *high in Praise and Honour* among all the Nations of the Earth.

THAT this Day may be the Prefage of all these Mercies, let us with a sincere and fervent Devotion direct our Prayers to the Almighty according to the Words of one of the Collects appointed for the present Solemnity.

Give

Give us Grace, O Lord, to walk worthy of that marvellous Loving-kindness, for which we now bless and praise thy Sacred Name; that thou mayest still delight to do us good. Banish from among us all Infidelity and Profaneness; Cleanse us from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit: Put an End to our unhappy Divisions, by which we have been exposed to so many and so great Dangers, and Endue us with a Spirit of Peace and Charity; that the Blessing of Peace may be secured to us and our Posterity for all Generations.

Grant this we beseech Thee, O Merciful Father, for Thy dear Son's sake, JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour and Redeemer, To whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory, World without end. *Amen.*

FINIS.

